The Department of State Celebrates the United States' Entry into the Open Government Partnership

September 20, 2011

Background

- President Obama has made openness a high priority in his Administration, committing his Administration to an "unprecedented level of openness in Government" on his first full day in office.
- Since then, the Department of State has:
    - Disclosed more information requested under the Freedom of Information Act;
    - Used technology in innovative ways that harness government information to improve the lives of ordinary citizens;
    - Posted a combined total of 75 data and toolsets on Data.gov;
    - Posted 11 "Digests of United States Practice in International Law" for the years 1989-2009 on Law.Gov;
    - Assisted the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), comprised of 34 countries, with the posting of data sets (OECD is the first non-government agency to be featured on the Data.gov site);
    - Worked with the General Services Administration (GSA) and OECD to create a new community page on Data.gov;
    - Fostered Transparency, participation, and collaboration at the Department of State through web video, blogs, Twitter™, YouTube™, Facebook™, a Text the Secretary program, ExchangeConnect, web chats, and Podcasts (Audio and Video).
- As President Obama today signs the Open Government Partnership declaration, the Department of State is proud to highlight some of the ways that the Department has advanced America's domestic open government agenda and created a more efficient and effective government through greater transparency, participation, and collaboration.

Accomplishments

- **HumanRights.gov** is the official U.S. government website for human rights related information. The website serves as the Federal government's focal point for information sharing and collaboration with external partners on human rights issues. The site's search function links users directly with news, reports, and explanatory information from the Department of State, U.S. government agencies, and other resources, allowing for easy access to publicly available documents. The HumanRights.gov flagship website was created in response to the Secretary of State's speech on December 14, 2009, that strongly affirmed the nation's view that human rights, democracy, and development go hand-in-hand, "making human rights a human reality." The website will also improve the quality and availability of human rights information and help strengthen outreach and engagement on human rights matters.

- The **ForeignAssistance.gov** flagship website provides a visual presentation of and access to key foreign assistance budget and appropriation data for the Department of State and United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The Foreign Assistance dashboard provides a wide variety of stakeholders; including U.S. citizens, civil society organizations, the United States Congress and government agencies, donors, and partner country governments; the ability to examine, research, and track U.S. government foreign assistance investments in an accessible and easy-to-understand format. The Foreign Assistance dashboard includes Department of State and USAID foreign assistance requests and appropriations data. Future versions of the site plan to incorporate budget, financial, program, and performance data in a standard form from all U.S. government agencies receiving or implementing foreign assistance. The Foreign Assistance dashboard enables the United States to take a huge step forward in becoming a leader in aid transparency.
- The **Virtual Student Foreign Service (VSFS),** virtually partners American students, or eInterns, from universities in the United States and world-wide with our embassies and consulates abroad to conduct digital diplomacy that reflect the realities of a networked world. VSFS eIntern duties and responsibilities vary according to the location and needs of each diplomatic post. VSFS projects may be research based, contributing to reports on issues such as human rights, economics, or the environment. They may also be more technology oriented, such as working on web pages, or helping produce electronic journals. Students are expected to work virtually for an average of five to 10 hours per week on VSFS eInternship projects. Most work and projects are internet-based. The VSFS Program was established on a pilot basis during the summer of 2009 and included 37 diplomatic posts and approximately 40 students. Currently, there are over 100 eIntern positions available that will be virtually assigned to 46 diplomatic posts.

Announcement

- An open and good government is much more than releasing information. It is about harnessing the skills and talents of the American people, establishing greater collaboration among Federal agencies, and ensuring that the taxpayer's money is wisely spent.
- To that end, today, the Department of State is **recommitting** itself to the principles that the President announced on his first day in office and exemplified in our work since then. We will:
  - Establish a process where public participation on new regulations is based to the extent feasible and consistent with law, on the open exchange of information and perspectives among State, local, and tribal officials, experts in relevant disciplines, affected stakeholders in the private sector, and the public as a whole;
  - Our commitment of reviewing existing significant regulations in accordance with Executive Order 13563 to find rules that may be obsolete, ineffective, insufficient, or excessively burdensome, and to modify, streamline, strengthen, expand, or repeal them in accordance with what has been learned.
  - Continue to identify creative, secure, and relevant ways to leverage social technology to facilitate participation and collaboration with our external stakeholders.